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Correspondence, John C. Stennis, February 11, 1948

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FEB 11 1948

[REDACTED]
Princeton, New Jersey.

Dear Senator Stennis,

I was so sorry not to see you again last Saturday before returning to Princeton, but it was a great pleasure to meet you and to see in what sincere and capable hands rests the future of Mississippi in this crucial moment. Our state has become a focal point of interest throughout the world, a point by which other nations as well as our own gauge the working or the failure of the democratic way of life as opposed to the way of other nations and other peoples. It was in Argentina at the time of your election, and even there, public opinion and public attention was directed towards Mississippi, and there was a sigh of relief when we saw the type of man who had succeeded to the vacant Senate seat.

I have been watching with intense interest the developments during the last few days of the conflict within the Democratic Party over the issue of segregation. And since you were kind enough to ask me to write down some of my views, about which we talked last week, I am taking this opportunity to do so.

This seems to me to be the most crucial point in the history of the South since the end of the Civil War. It is a turning point, at which the southern statesmen will be able to either reassume that position of disinterested and clear-sighted leadership that they held so well during the early years of our Republic, or at which the South will lose for many decades to come the remnants of political power that she has been able to hold on to since the disastrous days after the Civil War.

Many issues of grave import are facing the nation. The entire future of the world will be decided in the next few years by our foreign policy. The future of our way of political and economic life will be decided in the next few years by our domestic policy. But not least of these crucial problems is the problem that lies at the doorstep of the South, or worse, in its very backyard: the race problem. It is a problem that seems all but unsolvable due to the contrasting human elements involved. The living reality that is demonstrated in the feelings of the White population of the South is in sharp contrast to the abstract theories of "liberals" in the North. If the two opposing ways of thought are allowed to clash in their present form they can only bring disaster. They can bring only hatred and bitterness without a solution.

Let us explore and define the character and the essence of these two ways of thinking about the race problem.

The Northern "liberal" looks at the problem as a purely abstract one. He fails to make any connection between the problem and life. He sees it as a question of moral right or wrong. He takes an abstract formula, "all men are created equal", and he says: "That is right. It has always been right. It will always be right. We must make the world conform to it." The Northern "liberal" bases his theory purely on what his reason tells him. His theory sounds "rational." It will always convince an outsider who has never come into living contact with the problem. Those who hold to it are usually outsiders who have had little living contact with it. It disregards completely such inescapable elements of the human being as his emotions, his desires, and his passions. True, reason is a component part of the human being, but it is not the entire being. If, in solving a human problem, leaders only take into consideration the

rational solution, the intellectual element, they only lead to confusion and failure. They are solving the problem, but they are solving it for an utopia (a place that does not exist) and an uchronia (a time that does not exist). There never did, nor ever will, exist in time and place a human situation that can be solved by a purely rational solution, such as, "all men are created equal," and "man is born free." These can be guiding principles, but they are only useful when man takes into consideration the other factors involved.

In the South, unfortunately, the way of thinking about the racial problem is guided by the other extreme of thought. The Southerner must live with the problem. It is his past, future, hopes, and fears. He cannot apply some abstract formula and be satisfied at that. He must be governed by emotions and passions and projects. His reason sometimes tends to take a back seat and allow the other parts of his living being to take control. It seems to me to be an historical reality that two races cannot live together closely intermixed and in great numbers without there arising prejudice, hatred, and inevitable friction. In studying Hispanic American History, we find parallel positions where the Indians and the Spaniards come together in great numbers. We find the same attitude, often the same words and terms used, by the Spanish aristocrats about the Indians as we find in the South about the Negro. This is a human reality. If the Indian or the Negro held the predominant position, we would be saying the same thing about the whites. We find this truth illustrated in our own country. In New York, where there are many Jews, closely intermixed with Gentiles, we find prejudice, hatred, and friction. In California, where there are many Chinese we find the same situation true in relation to that race. In the South, where the problem is even more acute in regard to numbers, the race problem becomes more conspicuous. So, it is not a peculiar trait of what Northern liberals would have us believe to be the "immoral Southerner." It is not a question of "right" or "wrong." It is a human, historical reality that two races cannot live together closely intermixed and in great numbers, without intermarriage (such as in Brazil). This is the living reality that the southerner faces. It is his greatest problem and his greatest preoccupation. It is inescapable and unsolvable in terms of abstract rational formulae of moral right and wrong.

With these two opposing ways of thinking about racial relations, the human reality of the "inability of two races in great numbers, closely intermixed to live together without friction," which is lived and unescapable by the southerner, and the rational reality of the formula of "all men are created equal," which the intellect of the northern liberal wants to impose on an alien reality, - with these two opposing ways of thinking in conflict it becomes evident that a crisis is at hand. Who will suffer by such a crisis? The Southerner. It is his future and his life that is at stake. He must solve it, and he must show the northern "liberal" wherein lies the failure of the latter's solution, the failure that arises from its inadequacy, its inability to take into consideration all of the human elements involved.

A very obvious illustration of the difference between the abstract intellectual solution of the northern liberal and the human, living problem of the southerner is the reception afforded to the two by disinterested parties. A foreigner, or a northerner, who has had no contact with the problem, who can only think about it in the abstract with his reason, and has not experienced it with his feelings, desires and emotions, invariably sympathizes with the northern liberal. He subjects the southerner to such charges as "Undemocratic," "immoral," and "unkind," which are in themselves terms of thought, the intellect, and exist only in the abstract. On the other hand, if such a foreigner or northerner goes to live in the South, temporarily or permanently, and comes into contact with and lives the problem, he becomes the most sympathetic supporter of the southern way of thinking. He usually is "more of a southerner

than the southerner himself," for he is lacking many of the sympathetic elements that have been bred in the southerner in regard to this problem.

It is evident that the northern abstract formula can never be successfully applied. It is contrary to historical and human reality. It is evident however, that the southern approach takes into consideration the problem but offers no very positive solution.

It is the place of the statesmen of the South to lead in finding such a solution. They must follow neither the average thinking of the northern liberal nor the average thinking of the southerner. If they did this, they would not be leaders but followers. They would not be in the fine democratic tradition of men like Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson, but they would be in the degenerated democratic tradition of Henry Wallace. Their new leader statesmen of the South must solve the problem, for their failure would bring disaster upon the South and a ~~gain~~ dangerous blot on our way of life throughout the world. The leader statesmen must say: The living reality of the Southern problem is there, and it must be taken into consideration, but the problem must be solved; the abstract rational principle can be a guide, but it cannot be a solution. What then is the solution?

Today this problem has been brought to a head by the blind and selfish action of national politicians. Without any view to a sincere solution of the problem, the leaders of both the Republican and the Democratic parties have sacrificed the South for the sake of some ignorant votes. The problem, which is a life and death problem for the South, has become a political football to be tossed back and forth for a vote here and a vote there. It is obvious that with the calibre of leader that we have in national politics today that such a course would be a great temptation. The South has succeeded in placing herself in a position of political impotence. Driven by necessity after the Civil War to stand solidly behind the only sympathetic party, the Democratic Party, the South has come into the "habit" of voting democratic; and forgetting that the original purpose of joining that party and sticking with it was to avoid just such a situation that has arisen, southern leaders have come to find it easier to just vote "straight democratic" without assuming the responsibility for independent action, than to stop and think and try to solve the vital problems facing them. They are therefore in a position of political impotence. The Democratic Party knows that ~~there is~~ it will receive the southern vote, so it disregards southern interests. The Republican Party knows that it will not receive the southern vote, so it disregards southern interests. Instead of the position of the "solid south" in the Democratic Party being an asset and a necessity it has become the greatest drawback and most harmful element for southern political interests.

Until recently this fact was only partly obvious, but now it is totally so. The problem that is closest to the southerners' life and livingness has been kicked into the political arena by the leader of the Democratic Party, not with an eye to solving it, but to gather the votes of the Northern Negro population and some of the labor population, who are misled by the righteous cries of "moral justice" and "equality" into thinking that this is a sincere and workable solution for the problem. When this occurs, it is time for the South to re-assess her position, and take a new stand in national politics. She must not split up. Her only hope is to stick together. But she must see that her political power as an independent block is much stronger than either the power of the Northern Negro or Organized Labor, those very elements to which she is being sacrificed by an ungrateful party.

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This is the time for the leader statesmen of the South to Act. They should:

I. Create an independent Southern Democratic Party, whose principles would be: 1) to stay united in full consciousness of the vital importance to them of a successful solution of the race problem, and the inability to solve that problem were the South to become disunified, and 2) never to put up a presidential candidate of its own, but back the candidate that offers most, in principles and benefit, to the South, for a separate southern candidate would probably do no more than defeat the Democratic candidate, without having more than the very barest chance of winning itself in case the elections went to the House of Representatives.

II. Oppose the present Federal measures to abolish segregation in an attempt to solve the race problem. This should be opposed on constitutional grounds. The anti-Lynching Law and the Anti-Poll Tax law are clearly unconstitutional, but this unconstitutionality would have to be fought out on the floor of the Senate. The Supreme Court has demonstrated clearly that its decisions are no longer governed by considerations of justice or objective interpretation. They are governed by the social and political philosophy of the majority of the justices. These men are not elected officers, and have no constitutional right to express their philosophies in such a legislative manner. Therefore, if the courts usurp the legislative power, the Congress must usurp the judicial power and must argue out the constitutionality of the measures.

III. Offer a positive political program. As a purely negative measure to thwart change, the Southern Democratic Party would be both undesirable and unsuccessful. It must offer a solution to the great problems facing our nation today. The South in the past has assumed the role of the leader, the element in our political life that could approach problems with disinterest and statesmanship. It must reassume that role.

A. The Race Problem. It must work towards a solution of the race problem, taking into consideration both opposing views, seeing their failures, but not following either - being leaders in the true sense of the word. As a principle, we cannot deny the virtue of the northern liberal stand. From an abstract, rational, or even Christian point of view, there is a point to take into consideration. The principles of northern liberalism can be guides. But the people, the living reality of the South, must not be disregarded. These are the people to be dealt with, to be led, who cannot be ignored in any solution. We said that two races cannot live together closely intermixed and in great numbers, without intermarriage without friction. There are then three factors to the race problem. We have the races in great number, and that is a fact that is hard to escape. Unless we follow Bilbo's impractical theory that the Negroes should be shipped back to Africa, this is a situation that cannot be overcome. As far as intermarriage is concerned, this too seems impossible. The psychology of the Anglo-Saxon of the South is such that it would be impossible for many centuries, if ever, to intermarry the two races. The desirability or lack of desirability of this solution is ~~therefore~~ irrelevant. What is important is that the human reality makes it impossible. So, we have only one element left, and upon this depends the solution. The two races must avoid as much as possible being closely intermixed. Segregation is absolutely necessary. As long as two races are separated they can get along according to rational abstract principles. Their living beings are not in contact to any great extent. The lines to be worked along are then an attempt to bring equal opportunities of education, etc. (according to the abstract principles of the northern liberal) to the Negro, but maintain segregation (thereby, taking into consideration the living reality of the southerner.) Along these lines the northerner and the southerner could work together sincerely and in search of a solution. This cannot be done as long as the problem is being treated as a political football. It cannot be done until the South asserts its claim to political power.

B. The international problem. Whereas the men controlling our

national course are attempting to apply abstract formulae and patterns to the human problems of the South, without taking into consideration the living reality, they are going to the other extreme in international affairs. They are disregarding abstract principles and slowly sacrificing our own way of life to the inevitable disaster of another life and death war. The South should reassert its position of leadership in opposing the Henry Wallace type of confused thinking that does not see the basis and value of everything that we fought for and stand for threatened by Russian totalitarianism. If a firm stand is not taken soon, it will be too late. The Southern leader statesman is the only one in this moment who could, by asserting his political power force the government to take a new and firmer course in international relations.

C. The domestic problem. Threatened from without by Totalitarian Communism, our way of political and economic life can only be ultimately defeated by a collapse from within. The Republican Party failed in its solution in the 1920's and brought us the Great Depression. The Democratic Party, though solving many problems, has created an unwieldy, irresponsible, and often corrupt bureaucracy, and thus failed in its solution. Neither party seems to recognize its failure. Both want to go back to what they have offered in the past. Only the stimulus of a new political force entering politics could frighten them into a re-evaluation of their old stands. The Southern Democratic Party could examine the two failures, find the factors missing, and offer a positive and hopeful solution to the domestic problem.

All of these positive programs are of extreme importance. The first is an especially important one for the South. The second and third are life and death matters for the entire nation. It is time for their solution to be taken out of the hands of short-sighted, self-seeking men whose political ambitions would lead them to use these issues for votes and not to seek to solve them in all sincerity and all humility as leaders in a great crisis. We unfortunately have two types of leaders today. First, the Henry Wallace type, who thinks that the leader should follow the average man, instead of lead him. He does not recognize the fact that a politician should be a specialist in his own field, just like the mechanic or the teacher. If the mechanic always sought to have the common man's idea of an engine we could never have an automobile. If the teacher sought to have the common man's idea of life, we should never have education. If the politician seeks, as does Wallace, to think just as the common man about political problems, we shall never have a political solution. The second type of unfortunate political leader that we have today is the type who is thinking only of whether he and his party will win the next election. He never steps above this level to see the problems that it is his duty and task to solve.

Unfortunately the world is in its greatest crisis, and the most important nation has no better leaders to offer than these. The future of the world looks dark indeed. But there is a ray of light. The South can shake the nation out of its political apathy. It can bring to light a new political force that would force the political parties to look for statesmen rather than politicians. It would come to be known once more as the section of the country that produces great leaders in a democratic world, rather than lie

dormant under the epithets applied by so-called northern liberals and taken up by the entire world, the epithets of moral degeneracy, backwardness and benighted social values.

I have great hopes in your future, Senator Stennis, as one of the new leaders of the South. Sitting here in my "ivory tower" of teaching and learning in Princeton I only wish that there were something that I could do to help in this crisis that will affect us all so long in the future. But in the absence of such a possibility, with my duties here confining me to a much less productive and important struggle than you own, I wish you the very best in your future political life.

I hope that I will have the honor of seeing you again when I go to Washington.

Very sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

C. WAYLAND BROOKS, ILL., CHAIRMAN
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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

February 11, 1948

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

I want to thank you for your good letter concerning the problems which we face today. This communication contains much sound thought, which is interestingly set forth. You have described the situation in a clear and concise manner, and I appreciate very much having your views at this crucial time.

I was certainly sorry to have missed you Saturday morning, but urgent matters prevented my reaching the office in time to visit with you. I hope that you will come by to see us again.

With best wishes and kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

U. S. S.

JCS:RVM

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